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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by American Association of University Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

The American Association of University Women supports the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women; the priority theme: Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; review theme: Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session).

The American Association of University Women, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization, advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. With more than 170,000 global members and supporters, as well as 1,000 branches and 800 college and university partners, the Association promotes the economic, social, and physical well-being of all persons. Essential to that well-being are an economy that provides equitable employment opportunities; reduction of poverty; a living wage; quality, affordable dependent care; paid family and medical leave; safe, liveable, and affordable housing; quality, affordable, and accessible health care, including reproductive health care; and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. We support a Social Security system that provides inflation-protected, guaranteed lifetime benefits with a progressive benefit formula, spousal and widow benefits, and disability and survivor benefits.

In fact, the Association adopted a robust new strategic plan and vision, focused on education and training, economic security, and leadership for women and girls to thrive. Economic development efforts to reach gender equality and sustainable development can only succeed if women are part of the solution. Doing so yields a double impact: when women are economically empowered, families are healthier, better educated, and communities thrive. We reaffirm our support of Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its comprehensive and human rights-focused set of universal Sustainable Development Goals and targets. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the interdependence of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

We support UN-Women's efforts and advocacy to achieve Planet 50-50 by 2030 and UN-Women's call for United Nations' bodies and Member States to Step It Up for Gender Equality. The Association also reaffirms that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other United Nations outcome documents have provided a firm foundation for sustainable development and we applaud the commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

We support the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women's commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social, and environmental — and recognize that sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality and that all Member states and entities must take significant and decisive action to end the persistent global gender gaps and reach gender equality by 2030.

As stated in the Association's 2017–19 Public Policy Program, the Association believes: Global interdependence requires national and international policies against human trafficking and that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. We support the civil and human rights of all immigrants, including a fair and just path to legal status. We support a strengthened United Nations and its affiliated agencies. We advocate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the 4th World Conference on Women and subsequent declarations. We affirm our active participation in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and our commitment to ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The Association's commitment to women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session) can be found in both its mission statement, to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy, and its vision statement, equity for all. We support the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women's stated Agreed Conclusions (E/2016/27) that urges stakeholders, nations, and other entities to take action in the following five areas:

- Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks;
- Fostering enabling environments for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- Strengthening women's leadership and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development;
- Strengthening gender-responsive data collection and follow-up and review processes;
- Enhancing national institutional arrangements.

The Association advocates for policies for all women to achieve economic self-sufficiency and, through our research and educational programs, offers specific strategies and actions that are proven to advance women's economic security. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2017, the pay gap is widening, despite multiple interventions to topple inequities and force salary disclosure. Women are half the world's workforce and women's economic empowerment and their ability to create economic change are proven components in achieving gender equality.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 10 calls for fiscal, wage and social protection policies to progressively achieve greater equality. To enhance social protections and achieve economic self-sufficiency for all women, the Association advocates for:

- Pay equity and fairness in compensation and benefits at every socioeconomic level and in every industry;
- Equitable access and advancement in employment, including vigorous enforcement of employment anti-discrimination statutes;
- Greater availability of and access to a high standard of benefits and policies that promote work-life balance, including quality and affordable dependent care;
- Programs that provide women with education, training, and support for success in the workforce, including non-traditional occupations and women's entrepreneurship;
- Strengthening programs, including welfare and career and technical education, to improve postsecondary education access, career development, and earning potential;
- Strengthening retirement benefits and programs, including pension improvements and protecting Social Security from privatization.

The American Association of University Women urges Member States to take action through legislation and investment with timetable driven metrics and quantitative measures to ensure equal opportunities and rights in all aspects of life — legal, environmental, social protections — and the support, training, and human and civil rights needed to achieve equity for all.